

A INRIAIL

Six Counties 20p
Elsewhere 25p

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STRIP-SEARCHES

"You are alone in an atmosphere of hostility, you are stripped not only of your clothing but every attempt is made to strip you of your self-respect. Your body is scrutinised inch by inch, hands are run along the sides of your feet and the back and palms of your hands, around the neck and through your hair, every action meticulously and slowly performed. If menstruating your sanitary protection must be removed and given up for inspection - you must stand therefore throughout the procedure without sanitary protection. There is no degree of decency preserved throughout a strip search. It is simply a debasing and revolting practice."
Statement from Magherry Prison
September 1986.

Four years ago, on November 11th 1982, systematic strip searching of women prisoners was introduced in Armagh Jail. Prior to this, regular and extensive strip searching had not been used. Women prisoners are strip searched on entering and leaving the jail. This means that remand prisoners (i.e. Women who are held in custody awaiting their trial) are particularly affected as they often must make regular court appearances and are strip searched on leaving and entering the prison. During their trial, women prisoners may be strip searched twice daily, five days a week, for the duration of the trial.

Women prisoners are **not** strip searched for security reasons. On a court appearance a remand prisoner is strip searched before leaving the prison. She goes to a court in a van where she is locked up in a cubicle on her own. At **no time** is she in contact with any member of the public. On her return to prison, maybe thirty minutes later, she is stripped searched again. A woman who refuses to strip will be forcibly stripped. A woman who refuses to remove her sanitary pad or tampon will have it forcibly removed.

Strip searching is an act of violence against women prisoners. It is a tool of repression and state control designed to

psychologically 'break' the women. The sexism which pervades our society is heightened in a prison where a woman is isolated and vulnerable and her sex can be used against her. Levels of violence against women in society generally are very high - rape, incest, wife battering etc. are all every day occurrences which women are fighting against in many different ways. Strip searching is yet another form of this violence towards women - with a difference. It is **directly** and consciously sanctioned by the state.

Over 3,500 strip searches have been carried out on a prison population not exceeding approximately 30 women over the past four years. **One** strip search is a violent and traumatic experience for a woman. And women never become "less affected" by, or "more used to" such acts being perpetuated against them. One woman, Pauline McKinney, has been strip searched 230 times. **Nothing** to endanger security has **ever** been found during these strip searches.

In March 1986, the women prisoners in Armagh Jail were moved to Magherry Prison. Over 5 million pounds has been spent on security **alone** for this new prison, making it the most secure in Europe. Yet women prisoners continue to be strip searched in Magherry.

The vast majority of strip searches are carried out on political prisoners. It is done for political reasons and is obviously an attempt to force the women into submission by attacking the one thing the prison authorities otherwise cannot touch - the psychological wellbeing and solidarity of the women.

It is also important to mention that strip searching has been systematically used against Irish political prisoners in English jails. Recently two Irish women, Ella O'Dwyer and Martina Anderson, spent 10 months in Brixton Prison on remand awaiting trial on 'conspiracy' charges. While in Brixton, Martina Anderson was strip searched 248 times, Ella O'Dwyer 227 times. Occasionally strip searching has been used against

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SUPERGRASSES

DEAR AINRIAIL,

The last Ainriail of Sept/Aug. '86, contained an article on Supergrasses which finished with the sentence 'The only consistent characteristic so far is that no Loyalist stands convicted on the uncorroborated word of a 'supergrass'.

This statement is untrue as several Loyalists are still serving sentences on the uncorroborated evidence of Roy Wright.

Wright (known in the trial as Witness 'A') was the Crown witness in the East Antrim UVF trial, which lasted 77 days between Oct '76 and March '77. At that trial 26 men (out of 28 accused) received sentences totalling nearly 700 years for three murder charges, three attempted murder charges, 6 charges of causing explosions and numerous other charges such as membership, possession of arms and ammunition and armed robbery.

Many of those convicted signed statements under duress and that was the sole corroboration of Wright's evidence - though this of course was not accepted by the judge.

Three of the accused - George Anthony, William Mitchell and George Sloan - none

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political activists - for example the women in Greenham Common, anti-apartheid protestors etc.

The British state has employed a number of repressive measures in the North over the years to break opposition to it by various anti-imperialist groups - internment, Diplock courts, "supergrass" trials etc. Strip searching of women prisoners is another weapon in their arsenal.

The campaign to end strip searching is gaining momentum - especially with the 4th anniversary of its introduction just gone on Nov. 11th. Strip

searching is seen variously as a humanitarian issue, a political issue, a civil rights issue. It certainly is a women's issue and as such, should be fought against by women everywhere.

of whom had made statements, were all given life sentences for the murder of UDA men Hugh McVeigh and David Douglas, on the uncorroborated word of Wright. Anthony received a recommended 30 year term, while the judge recommended a 25 year term for both Mitchell and Sloan. These three are all still behind bars which makes a nonsense of the closing statement in the Ainriail article on Supergrasses.

The Wright trial is of interest because, as one of the first such cases, it could be seen as a forerunner to the Supergrass system as a State strategy. The Wright trial contained many of the essential ingredients of the Show Trials which were to follow several years later such as

—Mass nature of trial (28 accused)
—Immunity from Prosecution. Wright received a signed DPP pledge of immunity from prosecution for crime he may have admitted in disclosing his part in the Mc Veigh/Douglas murder.
—Converted Terrorist. The converted terrorist label could have been hatched with Wright, who gave himself up to the RUC having apparently escaped a UVF court-martial.

—New Identity. Wright moves out of N. Ireland after the trial though it is not known whether he was 'pensioned' off. One suspects that he was, as he was produced by the police as a witness at a subsequent UVF trial though interestingly his evidence was said to be 'unreliable' and 'unbelievable' by the trial judge on this occasion.

In his summing up of the trial of Eddie Cairns of Montral St. for the McVeigh/Douglas murders (26/6/78) Justice Kelly said of the sole Crown witness, Roy Wright (Witness 'A' or Mr. 'A')

'I find Mr 'A' lacks the integrity, the sense of responsibility and the conscientiousness that enables a tribunal of fact to act with sureness in this rather difficult area of identification evidence'.

He went on to say 'He (Wright) was not in my court, an impressive witness'.

Yet Wright had been 'impressive' enough in the 1977 trial to send 3 others away on totally uncorroborated evidence in Judge McDermott's court.

Mark Langhammer

IDEAS FROM LONG KESH

The following article is not meant to be a definitive analysis of present republican strategy in the struggle for Irish unity. However, the issues it deals with are of consequence, and should not be ignored by Republicans when reflecting on the nature of the present struggle and the direction in which it is ultimately leading us.

Our examination of the present situation leads us to believe that there are primarily 4 reasons for the continued British presence in Ireland.

1. To ensure continued political and ideological hegemony over the area which can be referred to *geographically* as the British Isles.
2. To guarantee Western strategic interests.
3. In response to the popular commitment of the Unionists to maintain the Union.
4. The lack of popular commitment on the part of the British public to withdraw.

In addressing itself to the above factors, Republicanism has relied to a large extent on what Martin McGuinness has called the 'cutting edge', i.e. armed struggle. In recent years, Sinn Féin has played an increasingly prominent role, but that role is one of an ancillary service to armed struggle, rather than one of political and ideological struggle in its own right.

We would argue that, for the most part, Republican strategy has failed substantially to alter the factors pertaining to Britain remaining in Ireland. To substantiate our view we shall examine those factors and the manner in which each of them has been affected by Republicanism.

British political and ideological hegemony is necessary if the British are to ensure that the political, social and economic conditions exist within which economic exploitation of Irish resources by foreign interests remains generally acceptable. Furthermore, a physical British presence in a part of the country enables Britain to maintain that 'genuine British and Western interests' must be taken into account in relation to any considerations which may have strategic implications within the entire country; just as the United

States can - by virtue of its proximity to Latin America - work to influence the political situation South of its 'own' border in order to safeguard its 'legitimate' strategic and other interests, so too, can the British in order to obtain a similar objective South of its own border.

In relation to the above two aspects, Republicanism has met the challenge posed largely through reliance on the force of Nationalist feeling in the North of Ireland. This feeling has been tapped and subsequently channelled into a military campaign against Britain. However, such a campaign is directed against the British physical presence and has yet to pose a threat of any significant nature to British political and ideological hegemony or strategic considerations in the island of Ireland. The sheer make-up of the force which provides the Republican campaign with its dynamic - Northern Nationalism - is insubstantial and renders practically non-existent the strength required to pose a threat of the nature required. The form of Nationalism existing in the North is relevant only to those Nationalists living there. Because of its pan-class character, it is volatile and has historically displayed a demonstrable tendency to dissipate along the channels of constitutional reform. On its own, its potential to overcome British interests, and re-unify Ireland, is practically nil.

In relation to the popular commitment of Unionists to maintain the Union being a consideration of the British state, it must be said that Republicanism has traditionally displayed an over-simplistic attitude to Unionism. Unionism is perceived as being something which is passively dependant on Britain and exists as a philosophy/ideology only because the British want it to. As such it is inferred that Unionism exists in Ireland only to suit the British, and the possibility of Britain existing in Ireland to suit the Unionists is subsequently overlooked. Such an attitude is something which hinders Republicans from analytically reflecting upon the internal obstacles to re-unification which exist within the North. This lack of reflection, in turn, pre-

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vents them from devising an adequate strategy to overcome such obstacles. Unionism, contrary to general Republican thinking, has a *relative* autonomy. Much of its dynamic is internally generated and has little to do with the wishes of the British establishment. The popular commitment of the Unionists to remain '*British*' is a factor the British state cannot choose to ignore. In view of this, can Republicans genuinely substantiate the claim that the present *shape* of the armed struggle has made any significant impact on this aspect of British state policy consideration? The seeming emphasis of that struggle is placed on engaging RUC and UDR personnel. This, in our opinion, is a grave tactical error which, rather than weakening the link, serves in fact, to strengthen it by forcing all unionists to abhor and *fear* Republicanism and its aspirations, not only at the political level, but also at the deep-rooted community level from where the deceased and injured have emanated.

In view of such an effect, one would imagine that at least some attempt would be made to counter Unionist popular commitment, and, by doing so, put the British state under strain through having them attempt to reconcile opposing commitments. Even applying the most narrow militaristic logic this 'counter-commitment' could arguably emerge as a result of a campaign directed against the British Army itself, in the hope of producing a casualty rate unacceptable to the British public. Yet, despite various warnings from Republican leaders (Gerry Adams included) of the dangers of falling into the trap of Ulsterisation, Republicans, nevertheless, carry on seemingly facilitating that process and in the course of doing so, strengthen Unionist popular resolve. While we feel that such a change in the emphasis of the armed struggle alone would prove wholly insufficient, the present strategy, in our opinion, suggests that Republicanism suffers from a dearth of innovative and critical ideas.

That there is popular commitment in Britain towards withdrawal is not surprising. The British public have traditionally displayed an indifference to the plight of the Irish. Attempts by Republicans to court the 'left' of the British Labour party may be useful for generating opposition for single issues such as Plas-

tic Bullets, but as a means of applying pressure to the British political establishment in order to have them disengage the strategy is extremely non-productive.

Overall, then, it can be said that a bleak and barren time lies ahead for Republicanism in Ireland. If that is to be fundamentally changed, Republicans must re-appraise their entire outlook and strategy. We feel that two points must be given urgent consideration:

1) Nationalism as a force for change has only the dynamic to gain limited reforms within a six-county context. It may also generate equally limited reforms in the 26 counties by forcing Southern politicians to clean up the sectarian image of their state as a 'conciliatory' gesture to Unionists. Subsequently, armed actions based on that Nationalism can only but give an impetus to reformist tendencies independent of the wishes of those participating in armed struggle. The limited scope of Northern Nationalism must be supplanted and replaced by a new force which has meaningful content for the 32 Counties as a whole. A new and *genuine* 32 county Nationalism must be generated. This Nationalism, however, will only be sustained if it has a strong socialist content.

2) The present *shape* of the armed struggle - as distinctly opposed to the legitimate right of a suppressed people to use armed struggle - is in no way conducive to long term progress being made. Not only has it failed to remove the British, or substantially alter their resolve it has - because of its emphasis on 'local targets' - given Northern Nationalists the peculiar appearance of 'otherness' in the eyes of many people in the South. If the situation continues as it is, and change is not forthcoming, that 'otherness' may rapidly become 'foreign' and that task of unity could well come to appear as insurmountable - and yet another opportunity will have become a memory banished to the plot for Easter Commemorations.

Anthony McIntyre & Micky McMullan
Republican Prisoners, H-Blocks, Long Kesh,
Lisburn, Co. Antrim

We will reply to the issues raised in this article in the next issue of *Ainriail*.

AINRIAL VISITS ENGLAND VIDEO & SPEAKING TOUR

During the month of September, a video and speaking tour was arranged, with a member of AINRIAL visiting nine English cities. It was organised by the Direct Action Movement, an anarcho-syndicalist grouping, and included eleven venues with an average of thirty people at each. With permission from the Campaign, the Plastic Bullet video, 'The Deadly Truth' was chosen, and along with the half-hour talk, ensured a wideranging debate developed on the role the British state in Ireland.

VIDEO

The video itself (reviewed in issue one of Ainriail) had a profound effect on the audiences, consisting as it does of the relatives of fatal victims of plastic bullets relating their experiences of the violence, the media cover-up, and judicial white wash, by the British state.

The most salient points were to show the lethal nature of the weapon; the fact that most people killed were not involved in riot situations; and that the majority of the 16 fatalities were among children aged from 10 to 15.

TALK

The talk began by updating the video. Since it was completed 1½ years ago, Keith White became the first fatality from a loyalist area, during a demonstration against the Hillsborough Agreement. It was a sad irony that when the relatives of the United Campaign Against Plastic Bullets picketed Brocks fireworks (who make the expulsive charge and cartridge) in Dumfriesshire last year, there was a counter demonstration by Scottish loyalists.

Another updating was that Inspector Crutchley, who was in the landrover (and presumably in charge) which fired the round killing Nora McCabe, has since been promoted to one of two Assistant Chief Constables. This despite the fact that the inquest jury accepted the evidence of a videotape proving the RUC had perjured themselves on two occasions — when they claimed they fired only down a street on the left of the Falls Rd., and that there was rioting at the time. The video, by a French-Canadian team, used also as footage in the programme, clearly shows the RUC firing into Linden St. on the right of the Falls (where Nora was killed), and that there was no rioting.

A further important point concerned last summers BBC Brass Tacks programme on plastic bullets. When the Campaign discovered that the second part of the programme was a studio-based discussion, they wrote to the producer in Manchester asking to appear. He replied in a phone-call by saying that as the programme was aimed at the potential use of plastic bullets in English cities, then the experience of those who had suffered from this weapon in Ireland was not 'germaine to the issue'. They weren't allowed to attend. This arrogant censorship shows, more than anything, the importance of getting this video shown widely (it is now available in French, German, and Spanish).

The latest update, occuring towards the end of the tour, concerned the acquittal of RUC Reserve Hegarty. The fact that he was only charged with the manslaughter of John Downes, and that the media duely rewrote history to claim that he died during a riot, led many to expect no other verdict. Hegarty now safely manages a pub in England, despite the RUC's claim that he is back in the 'force'.

CONTEXT

The talk proper began with emphasising the role of the plastic bullet. It has been described as a riot weapon, and in fact has been used regularly in riot situations, causing frequent injury, often serious, and sometimes fatal. But most

deaths have occurred in non-riot situations.

The weapon is used primarily to terrorise. The best example occurred in 1981 during the hunger strike. That year saw more people on street marches in the north, than anytime since the early seventies. That year also saw more plastic bullets fired, and more subsequent deaths, than in any other.

There was a calculated policy by the British state to 'clear the streets'. The international media was in Ireland, and since the Brits couldn't control it in the way they wanted, they decided to deny the media footage of the mass demonstrations. Up to 100,000 people walked behind the coffin of Bobby Sands. A slightly smaller number followed the coffin of Joe McDonnell. They fired plastic bullets into that crowd. They have fired plastic bullets at many funerals since, reminiscent of the attacks on funerals in S. Africa.

Why were so many people killed in non-riot situation? To explain this, it was necessary to say that in a riot, the rioters will stand a 'stones-throw' distance' from the RUC and the Brits. In turn they will stay their distance. This could be anything from 20 to 50 yards. Yet most deaths occurred at closer distances. There is strong evidence that the deaths were caused to terrorise communities, to keep them off the streets, even for peaceful reasons. And why so many children? Because to kill children is to hit one of the weakest sections of those communities, and to multiply the terrorism.

SECTARIAN STATELET

The nature of the state which needs so much repression to continue its rule, and repression predominantly against one section of the community, was detailed.

The state from its inception in 1922, was founded on discrimination. The border was drawn small enough to ensure a political majority (2 to 1) for the unionist cause, and large enough to ensure economic viability, by providing an economic hinterland for the industrial east coast.

The unionist working class was bought off with marginally better housing, jobs, etc. than their anti-unionist counterparts, though they were still worse off than their counterparts in England, Scotland, and Wales. Discrimination and sectarianism affected every aspect of life, from access to political power, housing, jobs, to culture itself.

The example of political gerrymandering in Derry city, where for 50 years a unionist dominated council controlled an anti-unionist majority city, showed the nature of the sectarian statelet.

There is an apartheid system of housing in working class areas of the north. For example when the state was set up, a pogrom in Lisburn forced every 'Catholic' family to move out. In the early 70s intimidation created the largest internal shift in population in any European country since the Second World War. In Belfast many anti-unionists moved to West Belfast. Other areas such as Ardoyne had natural barriers to expansion, but West Belfast grew further west till it was no longer in Belfast. The latest estate, Polglass, was so far out it came under the control of Lisburn Council.

When loyalist attacks this summer forced more anti-unionists out of Lisburn, they went to Poleglass. When first being built, Lisburn unionist councillors picketed the site because they didn't want more 'Taigs' in their area. The British state compromised and built less houses than planned. But the councillors still weren't satisfied. They refused to send out bin lorries to the estate. It wasn't until the Northern Ireland Office threatened to withhold funding, were they forced to rescind their decision.

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With an unofficial figure of almost 30% male unemployment in the 6 counties (female figures are inadequate because they do not include women who don't and can't register), the recent increase in the mainly loyalist town of Carrickfergus to 25% because of pullouts by multinationals such as Carreras, would lead you to expect a levelling out of unemployment between unionist and anti-unionist areas. Yet there have been proportional increases in anti-unionist areas, leading to figures such as 40% in Derry, Newry and Dungannon, 50% in Strabane, and up to 80% in Belfast estates such as Turf Lodge.

The two largest manufacturing industries are Shorts, who build aircraft as well as missiles for the British navy, and employ 7,000 workers; and Harland and Wolff, who build ships, including vessels for the navy, and have 5,000 of a workforce. There is a majority in both industries of almost 95% 'Protestants'. And in culture, that sense of identity, of who we are, and where we're from, there is discrimination. The Orange Order can march through Belfast city centre anytime they want. There has never been an anti-unionist march into the centre. They are always stopped. On one occasion when a rally was held outside the city hall, during the hunger strike, the RUC attacked, with their batons, cracking skulls, and making arrests. The rally was broken up within five minutes.

IRISH ANARCHISTS

As the tour was an invitation from one anarchist grouping to another, this part of the talk dealt with what position Irish anarchist groups in general and Ainriail in particular, take on the occupation of our country.

There is a clear and common understanding by the two groups in the north, Ballymena and Belfast, and the Workers Solidarity Movement in Dublin and Cork, that we are anti-imperialist. That we are opposed the division of the working class in the north, the division of the working class north and south, opposed to both sectarianism and partition, and to the cause of both — the British state's presence in Ireland. And furthermore to the incorporation of Ireland in NATO.

But as anti-imperialists we are also opposed to the relations of production based on capitalist exploitation, whether from local or multi-national sources. Herein lie one of our differences with the republican movement, which is the largest, most active, and influential of the anti-imperialist groups. At best, they have a policy of nationalisation, ie. state-run industry, and at worst a benign free capitalist attitude which favours more constraint on enterprises, eg. heavier taxation.

As well as an end to capitalist relations, we as anarchists, are also opposed to the hierarchical relations of the state. Whether that state calls itself socialist or capitalist, by its nature it cannot give power to people in their communities, but must rather take it from them. Republicanism has so far offered nothing more than a tinkering with the bourgeois parliamentary system.

Systems based on workers power at work, and community control in the social sphere, with regional and central coordinating councils will only be achieved by a social revolution, not only a political one, which will only replace one set of bosses for another.

Having said that, we have every respect for our republican brothers and sisters who are committed to political and military opposition to the British state. In Belfast we have, and will continue to, work along side them and with other left-wing groups on issues ranging from social and economic ones to repression.

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WORKPLACE

It was important to point out the examples of workers unity in militancy. Several years ago, in common with Scotland, Wales and England, a one day general strike in support of health workers had massive support. But it was a one off protest.

This year, workers took action against sectarian intimidation. On the Shankill Rd., when six 'Catholic' employees were forced to leave the Housing Executive Offices after a threatening phone call, their workmates came out on strike the next day. Again it was a one-off.

Also this summer, when 'Catholic' employees at the Lisburn DHSS offices were intimidated out, there was a one day protest strike throughout the north's DHSS offices.

The problem with such protests lay in there being no organisational political basis to continue the militant unity.

The Trade Union movement is controlled by bureaucrats who want to 'keep politics out of the workplace'. Their opposition to sectarianism remains rhetorical. For if they were to challenge sectarianism, they would have to challenge the state itself, and the marginal privileges of the unionist workforce. But to do this is to risk losing their own industrial base, to risk alienating workers in places like Shorts, and to risk the creation of a split— which might lead to the a loyalist trade union movement.

It won't be until a rank and file movement independent of the bureaucracy, and with an anti-imperialist approach, is built up, will sectarianism be successfully challenged in the workplace.

ENGLAND

People in England have a responsibility to themselves and to their communities to take up issues such as plastic bullets. They will be used against black people, against inner city areas, against strikers, maybe at Greenham, in short against anyone successfully opposing the British state.

But what is happening in Ireland is not an experiment. We are not guinea-pigs. It's the real thing, and we're real people. Because the British state draws its legitimacy from people living there, they have a responsibility to oppose its occupation of the north of Ireland, just as people in the USA had a responsibility to oppose the war in Vietnam.

There are many ways this can be articulated. One obvious way is to support Irish solidarity marches, such as the annual Troops Out Movement march on the anniversary of Bloody Sunday. There is a reluctance among some anarchists to have anything to do with TOM, because it is seen as a 'Trotskyist' front.

In reply it was pointed out that the aims of TOM are Troops Out and self-determination for the Irish people. Anarchists should find no quarrel with that.

Secondly to go on a march does not mean you support every thing said from the platform. Anarchists are quite prepared to go on an anti-apartheid march to show their opposition to the racist regime, and Britain's role in supporting it, without necessarily agreeing with a platform call of support for the ANC.

They went on marches during the miners strike to show their solidarity with the striking miners, without necessarily agreeing with all of Scargill's politics. Is Ireland too close to home?

Another way of taking up the struggle is through anti-recruitment work. Not since the early 70s has there been consistent work in this area. Then, the

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British Withdrawal from Northern Ireland Campaign, which was composed mainly of pacifists and anarchists, carried out a variety of work from picketing recruiting offices, leafleting military shows, to encouraging army disaffection. As a result of the latter, a heavy political trial resulted in a dissipation of the campaign.

The advantages of anti-recruiting are two-fold. Firstly you are engaged in preventing people from your own communities being used by the state against you. The British army was used in the Glasgow bin dispute, it was used during the fire-fighters dispute (interestingly both cases were under a Labour government). More recently soldiers, in police uniforms, were seen on picket lines during the miners strike, and at the present dispute at Wapping.

Anti-recruitment work helps prevent young unemployed people from being taken into the British army to be used to kill young unemployed people on the streets and roads of the north of Ireland.

This work inevitably puts the issue of Ireland to the fore. It is an opportunity to explain the real nature of Britain's role, and to build an awareness of the need for a British withdrawal.

Other work includes supporting the cause of the Plastic Bullet Campaign, eg. picketing of Brocks fireworks at Sandquar, Dumfriesshire, and of the Astra-Pyro Technics Co. in London, both of whom make components for the bullet.

There are pickets in support of those people who were obviously framed, such as in the Birmingham and Guilford cases, as well as the demand for repatriation for Irish political prisoners in England.

DISCUSSION

The discussions after each showing and talk were positive, with much questioning of points already raised, contributions of other people's experiences, and a general supportive atmosphere. The public meeting

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attracted people from anarchist to feminist to Black groups. It would be impossible here to recount each discussion, because of space, and the overlap of areas covered, so I'll concentrate on a couple of issues which weren't just elaborations on the talk, and which seem to be of significance to Ainriail.

Apart from the surprise from some people that plastic bullets weren't after all just small plastic imitations of lead bullets, most people had a limited awareness of their lethal nature. There was a degree of opposition to local police authorities acquiring the weapon, but even when this succeeded, eg. Manchester, the police themselves were able to get them 'on loan' directly from the Home Office. Another circumvention was the example of the North Wales Constabulary, who have a stockpile. Yet there hasn't been a riot there in living memory. It is obvious that they are for use in Liverpool.

There was an acceptance that these weapons will be used in England one day. In fact, members of Liverpool Law Centre, based in the predominantly Black Toxteth area, were adamant that in 1981 plastic bullets were fired, along with C.S. gas.

That meeting in the Law Centre proved to be one of the most positive. There was an endorsement of what was being said, and a strong sense of solidarity with the struggle of Irish people against the British state. A member of the Centre, during a conversation before the talk, explained the sympathy he felt towards Irish people in Liverpool, which had been reciprocated, because of the common racism they experience.

That link between Irish and Black struggles was not restricted to the meeting. A video will be purchased, along with the Women and Ireland group, to show more extensively in Liverpool; to include material on Ireland in future cultural and political events; and there was talk of a Black delegation coming to the north next year.

ANGLO-IRISH ACCORD

The Accord was the subject of frequent questioning. Was it a move towards a united Ireland? If not why are the loyalists protesting? It was explained that there were three main planks of the Accord.

Firstly to undermine the electoral growth of Sinn Fein in the north, and its extension into the south, where only a few seats won would upset the delicate balancing between Fianna Fail and the Coalition government.

This was mainly the motivation for Dublin's consent. For the first time in 65 years they have agreed to recognise the legitimacy of British rule in the north, and give such an agreement international standing by lodging it with the UN.

Finally the loyalist reaction was foreseen. The decision to stand up to that opposition, can be explained by the British wanting to keep their options open. By 'softening' up loyalism, as well as attempting to undermine republicanism, they will be more able to mould Ireland to their liking.

RELIGION

At the meeting in East London an important contribution from the floor emphasised the role of religion in the loyalist ideology. Whereas the war is often often wrongly portrayed as a religious war, the institutions of religion do play an important part, but entirely opposite parts as regards their respective 'communities'.

On the one hand the Catholic Church is implacably opposed to the military and political struggles against the British, even going so far as to ask volunteers

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of the IRA and INLA to 'excommunicate' themselves. Every Sunday Church pulpits are used to denounce resistance. At the same time the republican 'An Phoblacht' paper constantly challenges the authority of the Church hierarchy in its definitions of what is 'just', what is 'terrorism', what is 'moral', etc.

On the other hand, the largest unionist Party, the DUP, is lead by a cleric, Paisley, and has two clerics as Assembly members. The Official Unionist Party has a clerical MP at Westminster. The DUP's political rhetoric is inundated with religious phrases. In fact an evangelical passion, similar to that found in the southern states of the USA, animates their speeches — from Wells' 'Sodomy is a greater sin than murder', to Robinson's, 'God will protect me in the Irish Republic'.

RACISM

During the discussion in Newcastle an interesting comparison was made between the inadequate anarchist analysis of imperialism with that of racism. A young black man pointed out that anarchists had failed to come to terms with the causes of racism, as they failed to come to terms with Britain's role in Ireland.

Anarchism, like socialism, had taken root amongst the working class of industrialised Europe, yet those countries were also the centres of empires, and the respective working classes had materially benefitted from that imperialism, eg. the British Welfare state, although it had to be fought for, was made possible because of the surplus available from the robbing of raw materials and labour from the colonies.

It was felt imperative that contact be kept up to compare notes, and develop an anarchist analysis of imperialism and racism.



This issue of Ainriail is later than usual - two months in fact! We had other commitments, and hope that you will bear with us.

There are two letters/articles in this issue from readers, which we are pleased to print. We welcome all correspondence which contributes to a constructive debate.

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